

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley

Friday, May 19, 2006

Children's Hospital of Central California

9300 Valley Children's Place

Madera, California 93638

Public Forum for Madera County: 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Summary of Public Forum Proceedings

Welcome and Introductions

As Chair of the Partnership, Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak welcomed attendees to the Madera Public forum held by the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley and gave a brief overview of the formation of the Partnership and its activities to date. She introduced Deputy co-chair Supervisor Connie Conway, Supervisor Gary Gilbert and civic leader Coke Hallowell, who each made welcoming remarks. Secretary McPeak thanked Supervisor Gilbert and Ms. Hallowell for their work in making arrangements to hold the forum in Madera.

Partnership Board members each made self-introductions. Secretary McPeak then described for the group the context of public forums. She noted that three panels had been asked to provide testimony; testimony would be followed by an exercise wherein the public could also give testimony. Self-introductions followed by members of the public attending the forum. Cindy Tuck announced the appointment by Governor Schwarzenegger of Linda Adams as Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency. As Secretary, Ms. Adams becomes a member of the Partnership Board.

Supervisor Gary Gilbert served as moderator for the next portion of the forum. He introduced Beverly Hayden, Director of Nursing for Central California Children's Hospital, who welcomed the group on behalf of the hospital. She thanked the Partnership for giving the hospital an opportunity to host the forum and briefly described the hospital's concerns for the need for health care services planning in the Central Valley.

Senator Jeff Denham was introduced. He spoke about transportation needs in the Valley, the importance of school funding, and his work with Agriculture Secretary Kawamura on emerging threats to agriculture. Assemblyman Dave Cogdill was introduced. His remarks included an improving employment picture in the Valley and the need to find common ground between business, agriculture, housing and the environment. At the end of their presentations, Secretary McPeak thanked Senator Denham and Assemblyman Cogdill for visiting and for their pledge of continuing assistance.

Three panels of local leaders were invited to provide testimony. Supervisor Gilbert chaired the panel portion of the testimony and introduced the government panel:

Government Panel

Supervisor Frank Bigelow

Vice Mayor Steve Mindt, City of Madera

Dr. Sally Frasier, Superintendent, Madera County Office of Education
Angel Johnstone representing the City of Chowchilla
Sheriff John Anderson, Madera County Sheriff's Department
Elaine Bethel-Fink, Tribal Chairperson, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians
Stell Manfredi, Madera County Administrative Officer

Panel members provided the Partnership Board with a great deal of information on both agriculture and economic development in the county as well as providing a summary of the main challenges facing the area. Food production and processing remains one of the main sources of jobs in the area. The area is being impacted by growth. Expectations are for a 50% increase in population by 2020, which is only 14 years away. Part of the growth will come from adjacent Fresno County and cooperative efforts between the two counties are ongoing. Because of this projected growth in population, both planning and job creation are critical. It is projected that at least some of the job growth will come from tribal gaming. The area will need additional schools and health care facilities. An additional school bond will be necessary soon to pay for school construction. It was also noted that the county has the lowest percentage of students attending preschool in the state. Both the County of Madera and the cities of Chowchilla and Madera have endorsed a initiative to increase the sales tax by ½ cent, dedicated to transportation improvements. The proposal will be on the November 2006 ballot.

The problems associated with methamphetamine production along the Highway 99 were also emphasized. Not only does this overdraw on law enforcement agency's resources, but creates environmental hazards that must be cleaned up by other governmental agencies. Transportation corridors were discussed with emphasis on Highway 99 becoming a 6-lane freeway or increasing speed for trucks along I-5 to 70 m.p.h. to relieve congestion on Highway 99.

Secretary McPeak promised to raise the speed limit issue with Commissioner and Director Kempton at state level.

Supervisor Gilbert introduced the business panel:

Business Panel

Herman Perez, Madera Chamber of Commerce
Stephen Rico, Hispanic Chamber
Bobbie Kahn, Madera Economic Development Corporation
Julia Berry, Madera County Farm Bureau
Jackson Baker, Madera Quarry

Most businesses in Madera County would be classified as small businesses. Local businesses would benefit from a better educated workforce that greater opportunities for vocational training and for higher education could help provide. The county is part of the Central California Economic Development Corporation, a six-county collaborative funded solely by its members. The main purpose of the group is to create a regional marketing plan for Central California. The idea of creating an area-wide enterprise zone would be a welcome tool for economic development. Highways 99 & 41 are important for area tourism, and the development of resorts in the foothills and Sierra are important economic factors for the county. Many tourists come to

the county from Mexico, and Madera County worked closely with officials in Fresno to bring Mexicana Airlines flights to Fresno Air Terminal. Aggregate mining is an important business in Madera County. Building materials from aggregates are in short supply locally, but are needed for roads and other constructions projects in the area. Streamlining of the permitting process would help make new other aggregate deposits in the area available for use.

Cargo flights are also important, as a way to market the area's agricultural products worldwide. Statistics showing that 86% of people polled value farmland and open space were cited. Organizations are beginning to work in the county to preserve farmland and open space as well, but funding is needed. The county has taken the lead in some creative water storage programs, but water quality and reliability of supply are still seen as potential problem areas.

Secretary Gilbert introduced the Community Panel.

Community Panel

Tim Curley, Vice President, Children's Hospital of Central California
Dr. Terry Kershaw, Vice Chancellor, Madera Community College
Steve Mindt, Chairman, Madera Compact
Hub Walsh, Director, Madera County Department of Social Services
Bob Carlson, Chairman, Madera Workforce Investment Board
Gary Sevanta, Chairman, Maderans Making a Difference
Chris White, San Joaquin River Taskforce

Vocational education is one of the continuing needs of area businesses. In 2000, ten businesses in Madera County formed the Madera Compact to develop a partnership between business, education and government to address this and other educational issues. The county, however, lags in workforce training and readiness. Low skilled jobs will be decreasing and those requiring significant education will increase in the future, making continuing education necessary at all levels of the working population. Schools must be able to meet this challenge of increased enrollment and attendance. Children's Hospital of Central California is the leading health care provider in the county. Madera Community Hospital is the sole provider of adult hospital services. The health care industry is also looking for trained and qualified individuals to fill positions at their facilities. One of the biggest challenges in the Valley is that it has a higher percentage of people on Medicare and MediCal than other areas. Both systems reimburse at lower rates than private insurance. The three major priorities for health care providers in the Valley must be the proposed medical school at UC Merced, additional nursing education and higher reimbursements for government health care programs.

The levee system along the San Joaquin River is also a major area of concern. FEMA and flood control organizations are focused on the lower San Joaquin River nearer the Delta, but they fail to realize that the upper portions of the river are more vulnerable to flooding. Flood control, water supply, water quality, ground water, land ownership issues along the San Joaquin River affect recreation, aquatic resources and riparian wetland and recreational resources. These are all interconnected.

Secretary McPeak thanked all of today's participating panelists for providing insights and recommendations. She noted that the Partnership Board and Governor Schwarzenegger want to see the connection between human services and education and work force preparation, and announced that several Work Groups would be holding joint meetings in the near future to discuss overlapping issues. She congratulated the Madera Compact for their collaborative work and hoped that other models could also build on and expand the work of existing institutions.

Secretary McPeak thanked the sponsors of today's forum: Central California Children's Hospital and the County of Madera; AT&T; Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Kitchell Construction Management; Best, Best and Krieger; Madera Quarry and Lorraine Salazar of Sal's Mexican Restaurant for providing lunch.

Secretary A. G. Kawamura was introduced. He described California as 5th largest agriculture economy in the world, and noted that the Central Valley accounts for half of that productivity. Urban growth and urbanization in general represent challenges for agriculture. Agriculture uses more aspects of science than any other human endeavor, and it will continue to need both highly skilled and manually skilled labor.

Secretary McPeak introduced Carol Whiteside, President of the Great Valley Center, who described the scramble exercise. Nine flip chart sheets are set up in various locations around the meeting room. Each chart represents one of the Partnership Work Groups, and each chart is staffed by a Work Group recorder. Members of the public are invited to go to the chart(s) of their choice and give comments directly to the Work Group recorders for inclusion in the record.

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Participant List

Board Members Present:

Local Elected Officials:

Councilman Paul Boyer, City of Farmersville
Councilwoman Marcelyn Buford, City of Hanford
Co-Chair Supervisor Connie Conway, County of Tulare
Supervisor Gary Gilbert, County of Madera
Supervisor Jeff Grover, County of Stanislaus
Supervisor Victor Mow, County of San Joaquin
Supervisor Barbara Patrick, County of Kern

Civic Leaders:

Sheila Carroll, Ross F. Carroll, Inc.
Ray DeZemmer, Bakersfield Californian
Larry Fortune, Fortune Associates
Jose Rivera, Kaiser Permanente
Lorraine Salazar, Sal's Mexican Restaurants

Cabinet Secretaries:

A. G. Kawamura, Secretary, Department of Food and Agriculture
Sunne Wright McPeak, Secretary, Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency

Cabinet Designees:

Jay Chamberlain, representing Secretary Mike Chrisman
Assistant Secretary Jaime Fall, representing Secretary Bradshaw
Cindy Tuck, representing California Environmental Protection Agency

Designated Officials:

Appointed Liaisons:

Pete Weber, ANRON International, Fresno, Liaison to the Federal Interagency Taskforce

Other Key Partners:

Supporting Agencies:

Heidi Arno, Great Valley Center
John Cox, Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency
Jonnalee Henderson, Department of Food and Agriculture
Mark Keppler, The Maddy Institute, California State University, Fresno
Theresa Sebasto, California Water Institute, California State University, Fresno
Ashley Swearengin, Central California Futures Institute, California State University, Fresno
Belen Torres, Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency
Carol Whiteside, President, Great Valley Center

Other Guests

Carol Barney, Madera County Public Health
Patricia Barr, Trustee, Fresno Unified School District
Patrick Bean, North Fork Rancheria Vice Chair
Linda Beattie, Employment Development Department, Workforce Investment Division
Julia Berry, Madera County Farm Bureau
Cheryl Breedlove, Breedlove, Inc.
Tess Cabanela, Palmore and Cabanela Financial Group
Bill Conrad, Candidate for Congress, 25th Congressional District
T. J. Cox, Candidate for Congress, 19th Congressional District
Tim Curley, Hospital Council of Northern & Central California
Elaine Fink, Tribal Chairperson, North Fork Rancheria
Dr. Sally Frasier, Superintendent, Madera County Office of Education
Leonard Gorupa, Madera County Planning Dept.
Kirsten Gross, Madera County Animal Control
Nida Guzon-Palmore, Principal, Palmore and Cabanela Financial Group
Darryl Hildebrand, Kern Council of Government
Bonnie Holiday, Madera County Board of Supervisors
Phil Hudecek, Madera County Department of Environmental Health
Eric Johnson, AT&T
Angel Johnston, City of Chowchilla
Bobby Kahn, Madera County Economic Development Corporation
Mike Lukens, Congressman George Radonovich's Office
Steve Mindt, Madera City Council
Herman Perez, The Perez Group
Ravi Ramalingam, CA Air Resources Board
Christine Richard, Madera Housing Authority
Robert Rodriguez, Fresno Bee
Jessie Ryan, Campaign for College Opportunity
Hubert Walsh, Madera County Social Services
Maria Salas, Madera County Housing Authority
Janet Sangster, CA Democratic Party
Tracy Scott-Contreras, Madera County Workforce Investment Board
Gary Svanda, former Mayor of Madera
Patricia Taylor, Madera County Transportation Commission
Matt Treavor, Madera County Planning Department
Chris White, General Manager, Central California Irrigation District